Government
of Saskatchewan

National Children's Agenda

Summary of the Saskatchewan Dialogue

Summer 1999

Prepared by

Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children
Interdepartmental Steering Committee:

Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs
Health
Social Services
Education
Justice
Municipal Affairs, Culture and Housing
Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training
Women's Secretariat
Northern Affairs

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Background

Canada's federal, provincial and territorial governments recognize that children are our country's strength today and for the future. This is why governments are committed to working with individuals, communities, businesses and organizations to develop a National Children's Agenda (NCA). One of the first steps in developing this agenda is to work toward a shared vision for all of our children. It is only by identifying common priorities and collective responsibilities for children that we can begin to move toward the same goals. In the future, the NCA will give us the basis to arrive at a national consensus on children's well-being, help to mobilize Canadians around children's issues and serve as an important cornerstone for policy directions and opportunities for collective action.

In Saskatoon on Friday, May 7, 1999, the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Council on Social Policy Renewal launched a process to initiate dialogue related to the development of a National Children's Agenda. This event marked the beginning of a federal/provincial/territorial dialogue that concluded on September 30, 1999. The intent of the dialogue was to enable Canadians to contribute their views to the development of the NCA. It included a variety of means by which groups and individuals could provide their input throughout the summer of 1999 as follows:

- a web site (*www.children-enfants.org*);
- a 1-800 line;
- a workbook;
- a series of five roundtable discussions with a range of organizations having an interest in children's issues held in Vancouver, Edmonton, Toronto, Ottawa and St. Johns;
- a series of five focus groups of randomly selected Canadian citizens;
- discussions hosted by five national Aboriginal organizations within their constituencies and among their respective partners;
- an experts roundtable held in Toronto to discuss measuring results and monitoring outcomes; and
- respective discussions, workshops and activities within each province-territory best suited to their environments.

The vehicles used to facilitate discussions were a principle document entitled, *A National Children's Agenda — Developing a Shared Vision*, and a supplementary document entitled *Measuring Child Well-being and Monitoring Progress*. The vision document invited people to consider a common vision of what we want for all children. It also invited discussion around common values for our children, and four goals we want to achieve to ensure their well-being. As the first step in building consensus the draft vision document also explored six interrelated areas where co-operative effort could have positive impacts on children. This principle document concluded with a description, in their own voices, of the perspectives of the five Aboriginal organizations involved. The complementary measuring and monitoring document explored how we can measure success, provided examples of indicators of child well-being and proposed sharing effective practices as one way to increase our collective understanding of "what works".

The comments and suggestions received from Saskatchewan participants to the NCA dialogue are summarized in this report. These comments have been provided to the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Council on Social Policy Renewal who will incorporate them, along with the views expressed by Canadians across the country, and report the results to the public. This will be followed by the release of a revised statement of the vision, values and goals, based on the key themes heard during the dialogue.

Saskatchewan Context: *Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children*

The NCA was launched in an environment in where substantial integration across government and with communities is already occurring through *Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children*. Introduced in 1993, *Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children* is a key component of the government of Saskatchewan's social policy agenda. It promotes and sustains an emphasis on issues affecting children, youth and families, contributes to greater awareness of the issues impacting on child well-being and endeavours to unite actions across all sectors. Saskatchewan's action plan provides one model for government and communities to work together.

The Policy Framework of *Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children* represents a statement of our agreement and serves as a guide for collective actions to enhance the well-being of children. It sets forth a common vision, and a set of shared beliefs, principles and goals which focus on children and youth in the context of their family and community (see Appendix A — *Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children* Policy Framework). To achieve a broader, better quality of service, the Child Action Plan fosters community involvement and offers new ways of delivering holistic, integrated, affordable and sustainable community-based services which lead to long-term solutions for the needs of children.

The Child Action Plan facilitates community and interdepartmental government planning through a number of mechanisms and processes. At the community level, numerous Child Action Plan committees identify priorities and work toward local solutions. Building on the work at the local level, Regional Intersectoral Committees (RICs) work with line departments of government to facilitate integrated local and regional planning and service delivery. In turn, the Assistant Deputy Ministers Forum on Human Service Integration, and the Child Action Plan Interdepartmental Steering Committee support central government planning.

To date, *Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children* represents the co-operative efforts of eight government departments and one secretariat including: Saskatchewan Education; Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training; Heath;

Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs; Saskatchewan Justice; Municipal Affairs, Culture and Housing; Northern Affairs; Saskatchewan Social Services; and Saskatchewan Women s Secretariat.

Since its inception in 1993, *Saskatchewan s Action Plan for Children* has realized many significant achievements, at both the provincial and local levels. It is widely valued by community and government stakeholders, and is viewed as an important mechanism to guide provincial and local activities.

1. Methodology: Saskatchewan Consultations

Saskatchewan residents had a number of opportunities to respond to the National Children's Agenda draft vision document. They could access the 1-800 number or the web-site until September 30, 1999. In June 1999, twelve individuals representing a broad cross-section of organizations concerned about children's issues from Saskatchewan participated in the Edmonton roundtable, one of five roundtables hosted across the country. As well, in September 1999, three Saskatchewan experts in the field of measuring and monitoring child well-being attended an expert roundtable held in Toronto.

During the week of May 15, 1999 approximately 3,500 *Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children* stakeholders, including the Saskatchewan Council on Children and the nine Regional Intersectoral Committees were invited to provide written feedback on the National Children's Agenda draft vision document. *A National Children's Agenda: Developing a Shared Vision*, was sent to these stakeholders following the May 7th launch in Saskatoon. This document was accompanied by a letter from Honourable Bernhard Wiens, then lead Minister for the Federal/Provincial/ Territorial Council on Social Policy Renewal and Honourable Harry Van Mulligen, lead Minister for *Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children*. The letter invited participation in the dialogue process (see Appendix B — Letter of Invitation).

Stakeholders were asked to provide their written comments to the Steering Committee for *Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children* who served as co-ordinators for the provincial dia-logue process. The provincial consultation period commenced

mid-May 1999 and was to conclude mid-July 1999. This deadline was extended to September 15th, allowing additional time to wrap up provincial consultations and compile the provincial summary. The summary was submitted to the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Council on Social Policy Renewal at the end of September 1999.

Forty-one Saskatchewan stakeholder organizations and individuals participated in the provincial dialogue on the NCA. Given the level of familiarity stakeholders have with *Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children*, along with the similarities both in terms of process for launching and the messages in both action plans the number of responses received is not unrealistic.

The precise number of individuals involved in each of the organization or group submissions is not known. The stakeholders who responded, however, represent a diverse cross-section of groups and individuals interested in the well-being of children and families. It was agreed that groups and individuals responding to the provincial dialogue would receive a copy of the provincial summary representing their collective views.

Some Saskatchewan participants felt that we are more advanced in the development of a children's agenda particularly with regard to integrated approaches to service delivery and working together across government and with communities. In the words of one respondent, ". . . they are doing at a national level what we did in Saskatchewan about six years ago".

2. Findings

This report documents the views expressed by Saskatchewan dialogue participants under the following six broad areas of the National Children's Agenda — Developing a Shared Vision:

- vision;
- values;
- goals;
- how can Canadians best respond;
- measuring success; and
- next steps.

Many relevant comments that do not fit under any of the foregoing headings are presented under Main Themes. Each of the headings also includes a separate commentary from youth. A synopsis of the lessons learned based on the Saskatchewan Children's Council experience with *Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children* concludes the report.

3. Main Themes

The following comments provided by participants do not relate to any particular category, but rather represent the general views expressed by Saskatchewan participants on the NCA.

Apart from many useful suggestions for improvement in the wording of the vision, values and goals, most participants applauded the efforts of the federal, provincial and territorial governments for taking on this initiative. Generally participants were very pleased with the prospect of linking federal, provincial and local efforts to enhance child well-being. Federal initiatives and programs working in harmony with provincial efforts was cited as being very important.

One of the limitations noted regarding the consultation process was that individuals with limited access may not have had an opportunity to contribute to the development of a shared vision. For example, children, youth and those with literacy problems could make valuable contributions, provided they could access the process. It was suggested that to maximize "buy-in" across sectors we need to be as inclusive as possible, now and in the future, from dialogue through to "action".

A common thread running through Saskatchewan responses was the need for all sectors of government and for communities to learn how to work together. The infrastructure of government was seen as a significant barrier to launching the NCA. Respondents felt that we need to combine our many talents, skills and efforts to benefit Canadian children, youth and families. Some respondents felt that the NCA should focus on educating the public, the business sector, professionals and others on issues related to

children to enhance overall awareness and to ensure that children are first on everyone's agenda. Over time, respondents hoped that the NCA would result in a more caring and tolerant society in general.

The need for governments to commit to the NCA by providing sustained financial resources was strongly stated. Participants saw a need to find ways to move beyond a collective "vision, values and goals" to collective action. It was felt that Saskatchewan already has a vision for children and families and we really need to move forward to action at the community level. One way in which this could occur is through adequate resources and funding to support the work of communities. In the words of one group: "Many people are willing to devote themselves tirelessly for this initiative. Many of us are weary from seemingly endless meetings and political agendas which do not seem to be accompanied by commitment".

Saskatchewan participants believe that we need to maintain equity across the country. This was expressed in statements like, "we need to eliminate the differences between the have and have not provinces." Community needs, cost of living and regional differences should determine funding levels. We need to build on existing infrastructures, supports and programs for children and families when new resources become available. Supports and services for children and families should be non-stigmatizing and based on the concept of "universality".

Representatives of the disabilities community felt the vision document should be more sensitive to children with special needs, including disabled children. Equal and full citizenship of persons with disabilities must be recognized throughout the NCA vision document. Similarly, women's groups felt that both the draft vision and the measuring and monitoring outcomes documents should be more gender sensitive and address significant barriers like sexism and gender stereotyping.

Youth were particularly concerned about the negative impact the media has on developing children, and that parents need an education about the media so that they can make good choices for their children. They also saw a role in the NCA for businesses as a valuable resource for jobs and mentoring.

Removing the stereotypical image of youth is key to fostering strong adolescent development. "It's hard to believe that society will respect anyone under the age of eighteen, solely for the way they dress or their peer group. I don't believe in social labels."

"Youth want a cleaner, safer, friendlier neighbouthood, with street lights and recycling . . . more recreational opportunities."

"I think [government] . . . should follow through with what you write because I know that . . . people don't always follow through with commitments."

4. Vision

The vision proposed for Canadian children is:

"Canadians want their country to be one where all children thrive in an atmosphere of love, care and understanding, are valued as individuals in childhood and are given opportunities to reach their full potential as adults.

"Children who are respected and protected from harm will grow up to respect and protect the rights of others. Valued, nurtured and loved, they will grow up able to contribute to a society that appreciates diversity, supports the less able and shares its resources.

"Given the opportunity to develop their physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual capacities to their fullest, children will become tomorrow's successful and enthusiastic parents, caregivers, workers and citizens."

Participants were asked to provide feedback on the desirability of the above vision, and whether there was anything that they would change or add to make it more relevant for children in Canada.

There was general agreement with the vision. The level of commitment of Federal/ Provincial/Territorial governments and Aboriginal organizations to the proposed vision was cause for concern, based on the view that when governments change frequently, visions for children and families change as well. In the same vein, participants thought there needs to be "zero tolerance for actions which threaten the well-being and health of children". To ensure the viability of the vision over time, it was proposed that governments and Aboriginal organizations could demonstrate commitment to the NCA through legislation or through a kind of "universal contract" between families and Canadian governments.

Other general comments focused on the role of the community versus the role of government. The NCA must be community-owned and driven with government assuming the role of facilitator or convenor. Participants thought that everyone, including business and private sectors must own the NCA, as

opposed to ownership by a particular government departments.

1. Would you change anything about this vision?

It was felt the key focus of the vision should clearly be on "child/children", developing a vision where children have value as children. The following is an example offered by one group about how the vision could be reworded to keep the focus on children regardless of their ability, while removing references to the adults they will become:

"Canadians want all children to:

. . . thrive in an atmosphere of love, care and understanding, valued as individuals

. . . be respected and protected from harm, valued, nurtured and loved

. . . be given opportunity to develop their physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual capabilities

. . . live in a society that appreciates diversity and shares its resources."

Some participants felt that the vision needed to be expanded to include the "community" as a whole, maintaining that children are a reflection of the community in which they live. Children were envisioned living within families, with families supported by communities. The entire system must be healthy.

There was some negative reaction to the phrase "supports the less able", which was felt to single out and marginalize individuals, especially children with disabilities. We must be respectful of individual differences in emotional, physical and intellectual abilities. The development of a vision broad enough in scope to encompass all children was recommended, including acknowledgement of the special needs of children with disabilities. Use of a phrase like "provides appropriate support systems to those requiring them" was preferred to "supports the less able".

2. What changes, additions or deletions would you suggest to make this a more relevant vision for children in Canada?

Dialogue participants recommended the second point of the vision be amended to include the following: "respected and protected from harm, children, knowing they belong will grow up to respect themselves, to understand their rights and responsibilities and to value, respect and protect the rights of others".

"I want this whole world to realize that people should care for one another . . . all kids should be loved and looked after, and not rejected or abandoned . . . feel safe and always be happy and not have to worry about if they're gonna make it home from school."

Youth participants felt that they are already citizens, not "tomorrow's successful and enthusiastic parents, caregivers, workers and citizens," as indicated in the proposed vision.

The third paragraph was viewed as limiting. Above all, we should hope that our children grow up to be successful, enthusiastic citizens and that they can become parents, caregivers, workers or whatever else they choose. We must ensure the principle of "inclusion" has precedence over the principle of "achievement and success".

It was proposed that the vision could be restated to include the following phrase, "a child friendly community is one in which all children are safe, secure, nurtured, honoured, and valued; all children can contribute and the significance of their contribution will be recognized; and all children need opportunities to develop a sense of responsibility over their actions", to acknowledge that children and youth have unique and valuable knowledge they can share with adults.

5. Values

Saskatchewan participants were asked to comment on the extent to which they agreed with the NCA values and to suggest any changes that would better reflect their values for Canada's children.

- Respecting the voices of all children and recognize their inherent worth;
- Protecting children's best interests;
- Supporting children by supporting parents and families;
- Understanding the value of working together;
- Reflecting the diversity of our country; and
- Honouring Canada's Aboriginal traditions.

The values presented in the draft vision document were widely endorsed. Most everyone agreed that the best interests of children are a basic social responsibility and that children's needs should be met first and foremost if they cannot be met simultaneously with the needs of families. "Best interests" need to be determined within the context of the family and community. By supporting parents and families, we further strengthen the infrastructure required to nurture children. If we are going to reference the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, we must be prepared to uphold these standards.

1. ***Would you change anything about these values, individually or as a group?***

There is a need to support not only parents and families, but communities as well. "We cannot expect families to parent instinctively," or in isolation of the broader community. "We cannot lose sight of the value of the extended family in supporting healthy child development".

2. ***What changes, additions or deletions would you suggest so that these better reflect your values for children in Canada?***

Participants made the following suggestions or changes to improve the values:

"**We believe in protecting children's best interests**" — The choices and decisions that affect children need to promote their best interests and, where age appropriate, we need to seek the input of the child in the choices and decisions that affect them.

"**We believe we can support children by supporting parents and families**" — Families are primarily responsible for the well-being of children, yet all Canadians should play a role in helping families thrive. Some participants recommended the addition of: "we can best support children by supporting parents and families in their many forms".

Youth groups felt that we can best support children by "supporting parents, families and communities". Regarding the fourth value, they felt that it is not just educators, coaches, caregivers and other mentors who make powerful contributions to children's growth and well-being. Children and youth make important contributions to the growth of one another, too.

In the words of one young person: "I agree with these values, children should be respected and able to voice their opinions and not be cut down or anything."

"We understand the value of working together" — More should be said about a commitment to finding inclusive, interdependent means of involving all Canadians including the business and corporate sectors. These sectors can also make powerful contributions to children's growth and well-being.

It was suggested that a new value statement should be added, recognizing the unique needs of children with disabilities. "Children with disabilities are valued citizens in Canadian society. Equality for children with disabilities is not created by providing equal supports, but by providing supports based on unique individual needs to create equal opportunity. These supports and the manner in which they are delivered are best identified by the people who know them best — the users."

Given the level of systemic undervaluing of girls, some respondents wanted to include a value indicating belief in gender equality.

6. Goals

Participants were asked to comment on whether they agreed with the following proposed goals and whether they would make any changes.

- Good Health
- Safety and Security
- Success at Learning
- Social Engagement and Responsibility

1. Do you feel that these are appropriate goals for children in Canada?

For the most part, the goals are very child focused and appropriate for supporting children in Canada. A few respondents indicated that they felt that the goals were in harmony with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. On the other hand, some respondents felt that the stated goals reflect a "healthy child model," where it is implied that if we do not have healthy children, or they are not successful at learning, families have failed. The goals should reflect a

"holistic" person, allowing all persons, regardless of ability, to achieve their potential.

2. What changes would you make to this group of goals or to any of these individual goals to make them more relevant for children in Canada?

Saskatchewan participants recommended that the following changes should be made:

- A new goal which speaks to our commitment to support and value families in their many forms should be added.

Good mental health should be included in the phrase, "physically, emotionally and spiritually healthy". It is critical that children and youth "develop a healthy knowledge of sexuality".

- The second goal should be revised to read, "aspiring as a nation to have adults value and respect children and youth". The Canadian Council on Social Development's 1998 report, *The Progress of Canada's Children*, indicates that "[youth] feel adults have lost faith in them, often seeing them as irresponsible and, therefore, are not willing to offer them opportunities to participate in the community in a meaningful way." Adults need to respect and treat youth fairly. Children and youth are often not the first priority when decisions are made in the community.

The "Success at Learning" goal needs to address all developmental transition periods, not just the transition to adulthood. "Creativity" is critical to successful learning, but mistakes are also part of the learning process.

- The "Safety and Security" goal should be restated in positive terms reflecting what we want for children rather than stating that children should be protected from victimization.

With regard to the "Social Engagement and Responsibility" goal, it is necessary for children and youth to have a "positive attitude toward life and a positive self-image".

"Safety and Security" meant to youth that "children and youth . need love, caring and support". "Children should not have to go home thinking they are not going to be safe . . . need somewhere to live so they are off the street . . . kids at a young age shouldn't be freezing or sleeping in dumps."

- Restating the "Success at Learning" goal to "a positive attitude about learning" or "opportunities for learning" was recommended. Addition of the phrase "regardless of developmental capability" to the phrase "ready to learn throughout their lives" would portray greater sensitivity to the varying abilities of children at different stages in their development. This language was seen as more inclusive. Caregivers and parents must continuously learn while their children grow, as parenting a young child is very different from parenting an adolescent.

"It's not the children you need to work on it's where they grew up and who they grew up with."

"Adolescents need people to let them know that they are worthwhile."

- The fourth goal, "Social Engagement and Responsibility," should be reworded to read "development of social responsibility and appreciation of diversity".

7. How can Canadians best respond?

Saskatchewan participants were asked to respond to the following six areas where co-operative effort can have positive effects on children. Specifically, they were asked whether they agreed with these responses, and what they thought might be some other important areas for action.

- Support the role of parents, and strengthen families;
- Enhance early childhood development;
- Improve economic security for families;
- Early and continuous learning experiences;
- Foster strong adolescent development; and
- Create supportive, safe and violence-free communities.

Generally, the six actions outlined in the document were viewed by Saskatchewan respondents to be the actions required to arrive at the right balance of supporting families and addressing the needs of children and youth. Reference was made to the need to include a "header" or an introduction to this section that refers to responses or actions as "being community driven and respectful of community diversity". A group of parents said we want "a welcoming community, not a park sign that says 'no organized play'".

Needs of children should be addressed in the context of their families. In the words of a group of parents, "for parents to do their job, they need to be supported and healthy". We must value those who work with children on a day-to-day basis.

Some participants became very solution focused in their thinking about how Canadians can best respond, strongly advising a focus on prevention instead of using our resources on remedial programs and supports.

The middle years is an equally important developmental period for children and an important area for action. The need to provide some commentary on the environment and linking our activities with the larger physical environment was though to have been overlooked. Respondents felt that we need "an environment free from pollutants" to ensure healthy children.

1. In your view, are these the right responses?

Nearly a quarter of Saskatchewan respondents felt that economic security for families could best be improved by providing adequate and flexible child care. The lack of affordable child care is a tremendous barrier for families, particularly women, trying to return to or enter the workforce. Affordable child care and adequate parental leave can help to alleviate child poverty. Child care should also be available on an emergency or respite basis for parents facing short- or long-term crises in their lives. "With the increased pressures requiring at least one parent to work off of the farm, the other parent often has the responsibility for the farm work and care of the children. This puts children in an unsafe situation."

There were also calls for universal child care: "We need a program of child care services that is based on the five principles of Medicare; namely, universal coverage, accessibility, portability, comprehensive coverage and non-profit administration . . . we should follow Quebec . . . who is leading the way in ensuring family friendly programs."

Other participants translated the six areas for actions into some of the principles that should guide the development of programs and supports. Accessibility to programs when families need them is very important. Using transportation as an example, one respondent said, "The best programming in the world will not reach the most needy people if there is no way for them to get to the programming".

Enhancing early childhood development was felt to be key to ensuring child well-being. Some felt the need to reference the importance of the prenatal period. Other comments regarding early childhood development were very solution focused (e.g., incentives for breast feeding, strengthening mother-infant attachment, home visiting programs for young children and their families). "Parent training must be part of the education system."

Respondents from the disabilities sector indicated that the healthy development of a child with a disability is not necessarily restricted to the first six years of life. We need to be less concerned about "windows of opportunity" for

child development and more cognizant of varying learning and developmental patterns.

One of the ways of fostering strong adolescent development is through access to recreation. From a young age, recreation and sport can be a very positive experience for children of all ages. It was suggested that somehow we need to find ways of removing the barriers that prevent families and children from participating in sport and recreation.

One of the best ways of fostering adolescent development is to include youth in the discussions and decisions that affect them.

Some participants felt that "creating supportive, safe and violence-free communities" should be reworded to "respectful and caring communities". They reasoned that we needed to be more specific. "Violence free" means different things to different people. Communities most often mirror and exist in the context of broader society. Canadian society should be referenced as well, because we also want a respectful and caring, or "violence free" society. There was concern expressed about the array of violent messages portrayed by the media, and the impact on child development. Safe communities included physically accessible play areas for children.

2. Which of these responses are the most important to address?

Youth indicated that we should "foster strong child and adolescent development." Youth need to have opportunities to participate meaningfully in decision-making.

Most respondents commented that all six identified areas are equally important. There is a real danger in thinking one area of action is more important than another. We need to take a balanced approach by providing a continuum of support for children and families.

One group offered the following points that they thought needed to be underscored in determining actions:

- the emphasis is on all children;
- inclusion of adolescent development is a strength;
- need for co-operative efforts, partnering, sharing of resources in support of children, youth and families;

- emphasis on prevention and early intervention; and
- the importance of planning for transitions from one developmental stage to the next (i.e., early childhood childhood — middle years — adolescence).

8. Measuring Success

Saskatchewan respondents were invited to comment regarding how we will know if we are making a difference. Some of the groups obtained the supplementary paper on measuring and monitoring outcomes which guided more in-depth thinking on measuring success. Respondents were asked to comment on what type of information is needed to track the development and well-being of children.

1. ***In your view, is it important to monitor the development and well-being of Canadian children?***

There is a need to measure and monitor the well-being of children; however, we should not measure outcomes solely on the basis of the "healthy child" model. Rather, we should use a model of an inclusive society. Physical and mental disability, as well as emotional or behavioural problems, or the lack thereof, cannot be used as indicators or child outcomes. Instead, indicators should reflect how society is working to address children's needs to enable them to reach their potential. "Our preoccupation with the healthy child model places too much emphasis on fixing broken individuals . . . learning achievement, for example, may be a desirable outcome, but it is exclusionary if applied to a child with a learning or intellectual disability."

2. ***What particular kinds of information about Canadian children are important to you?***

Sharing effective practices across the country is critical. This needs to occur at the community level, involving service providers in the process. Communities need to learn how to evaluate themselves. As improvement is a continuous process, it was strongly suggested that service providers make evaluation part of their annual routine. Along with service providers, consumers of service should also have an opportunity to evaluate programs and services.

Saskatchewan participants recommended that the role of government in measuring success should be to set broad parameters, with communities developing the details in ways that satisfy their locally identified needs. Measuring success using both qualitative and quantitative measures was suggested.

Those who commented on the supplementary paper entitled "Measuring Child Well-being and Monitoring Programs" found the list of possible indicators to be very extensive. "If we just covered all the ground in the Appendix, we would be making incredible gains." Respondents cited the challenge of identifying indicators that are agreeable to all sectors.

The following comments were made by respondents on tracking child well-being:

- "Why reinvent the wheel? If it works in one community it might be worth trying somewhere else." Respondents felt that sharing effective practices gives communities something concrete to try;

- The NCA should promote evidence based approaches;

- A good way to track well-being is through long-term longitudinal studies that track children from birth to adulthood;

- Organizations require sustained funding and support to evaluate programs;

- The NCA should support gender related research in relation to child well-being;

- We need to map our resources to determine what information already exists and what gaps there are in existing data sources;

- More information needs to be gathered on the problem of child sexual abuse by perpetrators and pimps. One respondent said, "armed with knowledge, we can then develop a plan of action aimed at dramatically reducing

or eliminating this problem on the streets of Canada's cities";

- An effort should be made to examine effective models for facilitating or providing programs that promote the well-being of children;

- Children and families accessing services should be asked how we should measure success;

- Line workers and communities should give input about what is needed; and

- Public annual provincial status reports on children and families should be published and accessible.

Youth suggested that we should monitor caregivers and parents regarding how well they are doing. They thought that it was important to find ways of measuring happiness. How communities contribute to productive citizens was seen as another area worthy of exploration. Measuring self-worth and teen pregnancy rates were also suggested. Youth also cited the importance of receiving feedback themselves on how children are doing.

9. Next Steps

Having a common vision, goals and values is the first step for families, communities, businesses, the voluntary sector and governments in making Canada a child caring society. For this to happen, participants suggested we need to make a significant paradigm shift from fixing problems after the fact to proactive preventive approaches.

Some participants felt that new federal initiatives often seem to overlook Saskatchewan, suggesting that, while Saskatchewan does not have a large population base, our leaders in government need to know that we can make a valuable contribution.

A high level of urgency in making the NCA a reality today was expressed. "Somehow, we (families, communities, businesses, the voluntary sector, aboriginal organizations and government) need to work together in bringing the vision into action — NOW. "

Youth groups indicated that the results of the NCA consultations should be broadly publicized, and that perhaps the web site that was used for the consultations could also serve this purpose.

The Saskatchewan Council on Children recommended that a Children's Council (a structure with diverse community members playing an advisory role to government) needs to be in place for every province with links across the country. They thought that this sort of structure would be an excellent forum to advise the Federal/Provincial/Territorial governments on an ongoing basis.

A national Advocate, a policy or law were ideas shared by youth as ways for ensuring the longevity of the NCA.

Conclusion: Lessons Learned

1. Partnerships make a difference.

2. People are working together at all levels more so now than in the past. Partnerships between government and communities have led to many positive changes.

3. With the introduction of Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children in 1994, there has been a shift to a children's agenda because of a common vision for Saskatchewan's children.

4. It is possible for communities and service providers to work with government to create positive change.

5. Processes for working together take time, but are worthwhile and save time later on.

6. Commitment, commitment, commitment.

7. No one can solely control the "agenda".

8. The role of government should be that of a convenor i.e., facilitator, and supporter of community action.

9. As we work toward our "vision" we do not need to be perfect or solve all the country's problems today.

10. We (government, businesses, voluntary sector and families) need to respect community's efforts at self-determination.

11. Somehow we need to enshrine our "vision" for our children.

12. We need to measure whether we are making a difference and report back (i.e., a mechanism that provides an overview of how we are progressing).

13. Diversity enhances the quality of the process and the outcomes. We recognize that children's needs in our province are as diverse as the children themselves. Assuring the same opportunities for all children does not necessarily mean providing the same level and type of support to each.

Participants

Contact	*Organization*	*Telephone*
1. Aaron Schroeder c/o Children's Advocate Office 344 Third Avenue North Saskatoon, SK S7K 2H6	**Provincial Youth Delegation** The purpose of the Youth Delegation is to promote the voice of all youth in Saskatchewan through: training of youth and adults to work together effectively; youth participating in decision-making processes of government and community bodies; and promoting awareness of the positive images of youth.	306-933-6700 306-933-8406 (fax)
2. Archana Jaiswal Executive Director 2338 Dewdney Avenue Regina, SK S4R 1H5	**Rainbow Youth Centre** The mission of the Centre is to involve youth 11 - 25 years old increasing a safe, caring, healthy and adaptive community of support by sharing responsibility for recognizing, accepting and developing personal skills.	306-757-9743 306-757-9759 (fax)
3. John Anderson Regional Director South East Region Saskatchewan Social Services 72 Smith Street East Yorkton, SK S3N 2Y4	**Orcadia Youth Residence** Is a Young Offender custody facility providing non co-ed secure custody programs to 14 male and 13 female residents aged 12 to 17 years; and an open custody program to 12 females aged 12 to 17 years.	306-783-1310
4. David Steele Director of Education 1075-9th Avenue N. W. Moose Jaw, SK S6H 1V7	**Board of Education** Moose Jaw School Division #1 Provides learning experiences that allow each individual to develop toward the fulfilment of his/her unique potential.	306-693-4631 306-694-4686 (fax)

5. Loretta B. Elford Director of Education J.A. Burnett Education Centre 1600 4th Avenue Regina, SK S4R 8C8	**Board of Education** Regina School Division #4 The Regina Board of Education serves to instil the value of knowledge, the dignity of effort and the worth of the individual. "I belong," "I want to know," "I respect," and "I am responsible."	306-791-8200 306-352-2898 (fax)
6. Anne Elliott Project Co-ordinator 3310 Fairlight Drive, Suite 13 Saskatoon, SK S7M 4Z1	**Tamara's House** Services for Sexual Abuse Survivors, Inc.	306-683-8667 306-683-8670 (fax)
7. Derwyn Crozier-Smith General Secretary 2317 Arlington Avenue Saskatoon, SK S7J 2H8	**Saskatchewan Teachers Federation** Professional association for teachers	306-373-1660 306-374-1122 (fax)
8. Debbie Ward President 400-2222 13th Ave. Regina, SK S4P 3M7	**Saskatchewan School Trustees Association** Is a democratic and voluntary organization that ensures advocacy, leadership and support for member boards of education. Its mandate includes speaking as the voice for high quality public education for all children, offering opportunities for trustee development and providing information and services	306-569-0750 306-352-9633 (fax)

9. Bernie Howe Chairman 1359 Fletcher Road Saskatoon, SK S7M 5H5	**Saskatoon (West) School Division #42** Addresses the educational needs of children and youth through planned learning opportunities that facilitate the development of the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical aspects of the child through a child centred approach.	306-664-0010 306-664-0020 (fax)
10. Joy Bastness Executive Director 221 Cumberland Ave. N. Saskatoon, SK S7N 1M3	**Saskatchewan Association of School Councils** The mission of this organization is to enhance the education and well being of children and youth by promoting the effective communication between the home and the school. It promotes the involvement of parents, students, educators, and the community at large in the advancement of learning.	306-749-2491 306-955-5723 (fax)
11. Sherry Ehmann 2240 Albert Street Regina, SK S4S 5S7	**South Saskatchewan Independent Living Resource Centre** Is a community based, cross disability agency that promotes the inclusion and full participation of people with disabilities in our community.	306-757-7452 306-757-5892 (fax)
12. Wm. (Bill) Powalinsky Executive Director 3031 Louise Street Saskatoon, SK S7J 3L1	**Saskatchewan Association for Community Living** Advocates on behalf of people with an intellectual disability. A number of services are offered including assistance to families, volunteers and professionals in education and training; operate an employment opportunities program; provide information and build public awareness.	306-955-3344 306-373-3070 (fax)

13. Lynn Latta Director of Rehabilitation 1705 McKercher Drive Saskatoon, SK S7H 5N6	**The Canadian National Institute for the Blind** Works in concert with the community at large to ensure that children born or becoming blind, visually impaired ore deaf-blind are able to participate in all life has to offer, to the fullest extent possible.	306-374-4545 306-955-6224 (fax)
14. Pat Clark Executive Director 3105 4th Avenue North Regina, SK S4R 0V2	**SCEP Centre (Socialization, Communication and Education Program)** Includes intensive, remedial programing for children 2 to 7 years who exhibit significant to severe social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties	
15. Carol Glazer Provincial Co-ordinator 3031 Louise Street Saskatoon, SK S7J 3L1	**Early Childhood Intervention Program Saskatchewan, Inc.** Is a home-based community driven early childhood intervention program serving young children born with a disability or at risk for delay.	306-955-3344 306-373-3070 (fax)
16. Pam Kwochka 140 First Street Lower Level Weyburn, SK S4H 0T2	**Weyburn Housing Authority** Provide affordable housing to low income, seniors, and families in need.	
17. Sharon Moravec 11368 Clark Drive North Battleford, SK S9A 3P3	**Alliance Church** Community church	
18. Sandra Fowler Farm Stress Unit 329 - 3085 Albert St. Regina, SK S4S 0B1	**Farm Stress Line** 1-800 support and information line targeted primarily to the rural farm population	306-787-5800 306-787-9623 (fax)

19. Shelley Polos-Fox Executive Director 269 Stadacona St. W. Moose Jaw, SK S6H 1Z4	**Hunger in Moose Jaw, Inc.** Multicultural program designed to give children a "head start" in their education and includes pre-school program and food security programming	306-692-1916 306-694-0130 (fax)
20. Gail Szautner Chairperson 510 Cynthia Street Saskatoon, SK S7L 7K7	**Saskatchewan Child Care Association** Is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing Early Childhood Services to individuals, groups, and organizations.	306-975-0875 306-975-0879 (fax)
21. Kripa Sekhar Executive Director 302-2240 Albert Street Regina, SK S4P 2V2	**Saskatchewan Action Committee** Is an equality seeking women's organization with a membership of about sixty sic member groups.	306-525-8329
22. Fay Rafter Executive Co-ordinator Government of Saskatchewan 7th Floor 1855 Victoria Avenue Regina, SK S4P 3V5	**Women's Secretariat** Provincial government agency that works to achieve social, economic, and political equality for women.	306-787-1548 306-787-2058 (fax)
23. Cathy Ellis 2836 Angus Street Regina, SK S4S 1N8	**Midwives Association of Saskatchewan** Non profit midwifery advocacy group	
24. Kathy Dammann and John Barton c/o Saskatchewan Social Services 12th Floor 1920 Broad Street Regina, SK S4P 3V6	**Saskatchewan Council on Children** Non-partisan group of individuals representing a variety of service sectors that provide advise to provincial Ministers responsible for Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children on issues as they relate to the well-being of Saskatchewan children.	306-457-3756 306-373-0661

25. Ayesha Janzen Program Co-ordinator 106-33rd Street East Saskatoon, SK S7K 0S2	**Big Brothers Association of Saskatoon** Non-profit children's charity that delivers various types of mentoring programs to children and youth at risk.	306-244-8197 306-244-0089 (fax)
26. Dr. Mildren Kaufmann 29-11th Street East Prince Albert, SK S6V 0Z8	**Catholic Family Services** Non-profit multi-service agency children and families	306-922-3202
27. Director Box 1780 Meadow Lake, SK S0M 0V0	**North West Friendship Centre**	
28. Myrna Stang Family Violence Prevention Co-ordinator 2092 102nd Street North Battleford, SK S9A 1H7	**Partnership Promoting Violence-Free Communities** Interagency group that promotes violence free communities and provides public education. Some of the groups involved include: Interval House, Sexual Assault service providers, Catholic Family Services, Addiction services, RCMP, Child and Youth Services, and Mental Health service providers.	306-445-2742 306-446-2520 (fax)
29. Peter Waldbillig Co-ordinator c/o Saskatchewan Education Box 6500 Melfort, SK S0E 1A0	**Melfort-Nipawin Regional** Intersectoral Committee Regional Intersectoral Committees (RIC s) co-ordinate local implementation of Saskatchewan s Action Plan for Children initiatives guided by the Action Plan Policy Framework, and plan integrated community services. Their membership includes government departments and other partners such as health districts, school divisions, regional colleges, tribal councils and housing authorities.	306-752-6135 306-752-6272 (fax)

30. Joan Champ Interium Co-ordinator and **31. Robin Mitchell** Chairperson Box 7543 Saskatoon, SK S7K 4L4	**Saskatoon Communities for Children, Inc.** Is a partnership between community organizations that work on behalf of children in the Saskatoon Region and government organizations that deliver services to children in the Region.	306-373-8271 306-956-6147 306-244-1097 (fax)
32. Wendy Mahnic Co-ordinator c/o Bernice Puritch Yorkton Regional Intersectoral Committee 72 Smith Street Yorkton, SK S3N 2Y4	**Weyburn Child Action Committee** Local child action committee which supports the work of Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children at the community level.	306-848-2404 306-786-1305
33. Elaine Zandu Chair 60 Scott Crescent Weyburn, SK S4H 1T6	**Weyburn Branch** **Canadian Federation of University Women** This group is made up of women who have university degrees and have an interest in education issues/social issues. They respond to these through letters/reports/etc. Many communities have an organized branch.	
34. B. Hantke 1210 9th Street North Humbolt, SK S0K 2A0	**St. Elizabeth's Hospital**	306-682-2603 306-682-4046 (fax)
35. Sally Zimmer Box 212 Grayson, SK S0A 1E0	**Melville Child Action Plan Committee** Local child action committee which supports the work of Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children at the community level.	306-728-2405

36. Mary Jane Green Box 674 Moose Jaw, SK S6H 4P4	Individual response	306-693-2738
37. Marta Juorio 1601 Louise Avenue Saskatoon, SK S7H 2R3	Individual response	306-374-5543
38. Bryon Tudor Box 694 Lumsden, SK S0G 3C0	Individual response	306-731-2768
39. Darren Berg Dental Health Educator 10927 Scot Drive North Battleford, SK S0A 2N2	Individual Response	306-446-0495 (h) 306-446-6431 (w)
40. Thomas Iron c/o Canoe Narrows Canoe Lake S0M 0K0	Individual Response	
41. Nella Hegeman c/o Catholic Family Services 29-11th Street East Prince Albert, SK S6V 0Z8	Individual Response	306-922-3202

Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children

Focus on children, youth and families

Policy Framework

Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children, known as the Child Action Plan, is a major interdepartmental initiative of the Government of Saskatchewan. It represents the co-operative effort of nine government departments and secretariats: Education; Health; Justice; Social Services; the Women's Secretariat; Municipal Affairs; Culture and Housing; Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs; Post-Secondary Education & Skills Training and Northern Affairs.

In the summer of 1993, the government started the process to develop an Action Plan for Children. Over 1200 groups and individuals were sent a proposed framework of vision, beliefs, principles and goals for improving the well-being of Saskatchewan children. People were asked to respond to the framework and offer their suggestions for how government and communities could work together to better help families and children.

The Policy Framework of the Child Action Plan is the statement of our agreement and the guide for our actions together and includes the following vision, beliefs, principles and goals.

Vision...

The desired state of Saskatchewan's children

All Saskatchewan children will grow in environments that support their well-being and enable them to reach their potential

Beliefs...

Values and assumptions about children which underscore our actions

The future of society depends on the well-being of children.

Children have equal intrinsic worth as individuals in our society.

Children have rights and entitlements as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Adults have a moral responsibility to provide children with the best care possible.

Families and caregivers must be valued and supported as they care for children.

The well-being of children and their families should be a provincial priority, reflected in how we allocate our resources.

Individuals, families, communities and governments all share responsibility for the well-being of children.

Principles...

Guides for our actions to benefit children

Preventive Prevention is the best approach to meeting the needs of all children. At the same time, services must be targeted to those most in need of immediate intervention and care.

Primary Wherever decisions are made that may affect the child, the safety and best interests of the child must be the primary consideration.

Culturally Appropriate Responses to the needs of Indian and Métis children and families, and those of all cultural groups, must be developed in partnership with their leaders, authorities and communities.

Supportive The many family, kinship and community relationships which nuture the child and to which the child is attached, must be protected and supported.

Collaborative Partnerships among all sectors within government and communities must be sustained and developed to respond effectively to the needs of children and families.

Holistic Services to children and families must be holistic, comprehensive, child and family-centered, and flexible. They must be supported by coordination, integration and partnerships.

Empowering Interventions and responses must be developed with the child, the family and the community, encouraging them to participate freely in decisions which affect them.

Community-based Communities must be supported in identifying needs and delivering effective services.

Goals...

What we wish to achieve for children

Recognizing individuality, development and differences, children must be:

Valued Children's needs must be specifically addressed and given priority in the development of the legislation, policies, programs, and services which affect their well-being. All members of society, to the extent that they are able, must accept responsibility to recognize, respect and respond to the needs of children. Children must be recognized as having individual rights, equal rights and protections under the law. They must be given the opportunity to participate in the decisions affecting the quality of their lives. Positive social values that support the intrinsic worth and well-being of children and families must be cultivated and promoted.

Safe Children must be protected from preventable harm, injury, trauma and death, physical and sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation. They must enjoy healthy physical environments and be protected from environmental hazards. If, as a last resort, a child is placed away from his or her family home, the alternative must be safe, secure and nurturing.

Secure Children must receive adequate food, shelter, clothing and transportation. They must receive adequate financial, social, emotional, recreational and spiritual support through their families and communities. They must be protected by the intervention of individuals, families, communities and the state (provincial, national and international). Where interventions by the state occur, children must be given the opportunity for a permanent family environment, though the form of the family may vary for each child.

Healthy Children must be protected from preventable disease and disability and unhealthy practices. They must enjoy self-esteem, self-acceptance, healthy lifestyles, and healthy social and physical environments.

Culturally Connected Children must be given the opportunity to value, preserve and participate in the life of their cultural community and to respect the cultural communities of others. For Indian and Métis peoples, positive cultural identity and connection to their culture are priority needs.

Socially Responsible Children must be given the opportunity to be productive, to make a meaningful contribution to others, to participate in the life of the community, to value others for their individual and cultural diversity, to have a social and environmental conscience, and to be held accountable for their actions under the law.

Knowledgeable and Skilled Children must receive educational opportunities that give them the skills and abilities to develop to their potential. In order to participate effectively in a changing society, they must be given the opportunity to achieve literacy, knowledge, social and life skills.

For more information contact:

Bonnie Durnford 787-3652
Assistant Deputy Minister
Saskatchewan Social Services
12th Floor, 1920 Broad Street
Regina, SK S4P 3V6

Loree McPherson 787-2634
Saskatchewan Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs
9th Floor, 1919 Saskatchewan Drive
Regina, SK S4P 3V7

Betty Ann Pottruff 787-8954
Saskatchewan Justice
4th Floor, 1874 Scarth Street
Regina, SK S4P 3V7

Charlene LaFleur-Graham 787-5709
Saskatchewan Justice
4th Floor, 1874 Scarth Street
Regina, SK S4P 3V7

Joanne Havelock 787-2499
Saskatchewan Women's Secretariat
7th Floor, 1855 Victoria Avenue
Regina, SK S4P 3V5

Rosanne Glass 787-3943
Saskatchewan Education
2nd Floor, 2220 College Avenue
Regina, SK S4P 3V6

Joe Kluger 787-3298
Saskatchewan Health
1st Floor, 3475 Albert Street
Regina, SK S4S 6X6

Margaret Morrissette 787-5877
Saskatchewan Municipal Affairs, Culture & Housing
410 - 1855 Victoria Avenue
Regina, SK S4P 3V7

Pat Hoffman 787-3202
Saskatchewan Post Secondary Education & Skills Training
2220 College Avenue
Regina, SK S4P 3V7

Dorothy MacAuley 425-4217
Northern Affairs
Box 5000
LaRonge, SK S0J 1L0

Susan Hetu 787-0688
Saskatchewan Social Services
12th Floor, 1920 Broad Street
Regina, SK S4P 3V6

Government of Saskatchewan 09/99

Minister of Social Services

SASKATCHEWAN

Legislative Building
Regina, Saskatchewan S4S 0B3
(306) 787-3661

May 11, 1999

Dear Friend/Colleague:

> *"Children are Canada's strength, today and in the future. That's why federal, provincial, territorial governments and aboriginal groups are committed to working with Canadians to create a National Children's Agenda." (National Children's Agenda - Backgrounder)*

On Friday, May 7, Saskatchewan Premier Roy Romanow and the Federal Ministers of Health and Human Resources Development Canada announced one of the most significant new initiatives in children's issues in recent years: the establishment of a National Children's Agenda This is a joint initiative of the Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments, working with five National Aboriginal groups. The launch of the National Children's Agenda follows the recent signing of the Social Union agreement and is an example of how governments can work together to make life better for all Canadians.

At the launch of the National Children's Agenda in Saskatoon last week, the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministerial Council released a public discussion paper entitled *A National Children's Agenda: Developing a Shared Vision*, and a supplementary paper on *Measuring Child Well-being and Monitoring Progress*. They also announced a public dialogue process.

The *Vision* discussion paper, an important tool in developing a National Children's Agenda, rallies Canadians to create a society that values children, and invites them to provide feedback on a common vision, goals and areas for future action. By developing a shared vision, we can build on the work that is already occurring across the country and ensure that all Canadian children have an opportunity to reach their full potential. Turning a vision into reality means we also need to know that we have made a difference in the lives of children. The supplementary paper on measuring outcomes for children suggests ways to chart our progress.

The public dialogue process involves a series of Federal/Provincial/Territorial roundtables to discuss and refine the thinking provided in the discussion paper. Participation at these roundtables will include people from all jurisdictions in Canada. There are several ways to send in your comments. You can write to: National Children's Agenda, 280 Albert Street, 10th Floor, Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 5G8; or contact the web site at: www.children-enfants.org; or call: 1-800-361-6392. In addition, some jurisdictions such as Saskatchewan are planning a broad-based community consultation. Aboriginal organizations will also be conducting consultations.

Respectively, as the lead Minister for Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children and the lead Saskatchewan Minister and co-chair for the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Council on Social Policy Renewal, we invite you to participate in the Saskatchewan consultation process. As a member of the Saskatchewan Action Plan for Children network, we would like your written feedback on the *Vision* document.

The document is attached along with a set of questions that will help guide your responses. If you think other people would benefit from having an opportunity to review it, we would be glad to send out more copies. Please return your comments by July 16 to the Interdepartmental Steering Committee on the Action Plan for Children, care of Saskatchewan Social Services, 1920 Broad St. Regina SK S4P 3V6. Once we have received all the feedback, we will consolidate the responses into a summary report which will go to the Federal/Provincial/Territorial ministers, aboriginal leaders and consultation participants such as yourself, this fall.

In many ways, the National Children's Agenda parallels the development of the Saskatchewan Action Plan for Children, and is at the stage we were at several years ago: beginning by seeking community and professional advice on what vision we have for our children and how we can improve their lives, but will do so at a national level. While still in the developmental stage, the National Children's Agenda nevertheless represents a significant national commitment to all of Canada's children across all jurisdictions. It also offers Saskatchewan an opportunity to engage national involvement in children's issues, and augment the work we have done with the Saskatchewan Action Plan for children.

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We hope you can join with us in our support and enthusiasm for this important new initiative. If you have any questions or want more information, please contact Susan Hetu at 787-3516.

Sincerely yours,

Bernhard H. Wiens
Intergovernmental & Aboriginal
Affairs/Provincial Secretary

Harry Van Mulligen
Social Services